

TAKING BETTER NOTES



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LECTURE NOTES

- First, don't miss lecture! You end up cheating yourself on getting your questions answered.
- Complete your homework and reading before class.
- Always clearly label your notes with the date at the top.
- Do not write word for word!
 - Only write down the most important information.
- The average amount of notes is *two to four pages per one hour of lecture*.
- Use abbreviations, such as info, demo, initials, chemical symbols, and math symbols.
 - Don't be afraid to get creative, but just make sure you remember what your abbreviations mean.
- Listening is equally as important as the notes you take. It takes **three skills**.
 - **Attitude**—Even if you don't like the class, professor, or subject, write it down.
 - **Attention**—You can't learn when you're day dreaming or doodling.
 - **Adjustment**—Incorporate and tie facts together as you go, or immediately after lecture.
- Listen for lecture cues for what may be on the exam and mark that information clearly in your notes.
 - Lecture cues include:
 - The professor changes tone, such as speaking louder, softer, slower, or more precisely.
 - Words like *therefore, first, finally*, and "*this is a common mistake*" or "*you'll see this later.*"
 - Watch for visual clues too!
 - Also be aware of one sentence summaries, usually at the beginning or end of class.
- Mark areas that the lecturer emphasizes by ★starring, underlining, or circling, etc.
- Make sure to not only write down, but label examples.
 - EX: A form of visual aid is a concept map.

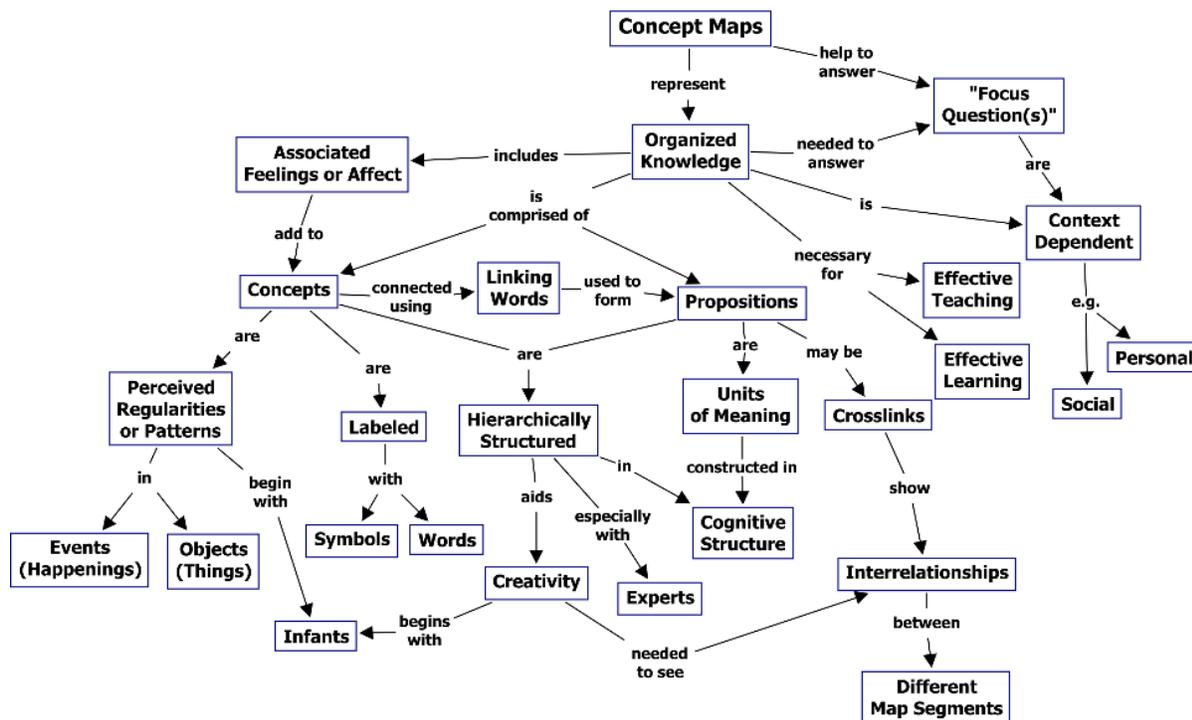
POST-LECTURE REVIEW

- Polish your notes within 24 hours of lecture:
 - Complete your sentences.
 - Define key words and unfamiliar vocabulary.
 - Fill in missing information and answer any questions not covered.
 - Correct misspelled words.
 - Clarify illegible handwriting and confusing sentences.
 - Remove unnecessary information.
 - Revise your visuals.
- Review your notes from the previous class before your next lecture: Write key words and phrases in the margins as you reread your notes.

- Make sure you can recite the detailed information that they key word is connected to before you move on to the next point.
- Reviewing is revisiting pre-existing knowledge.
 - Reflecting is finding implications and meaning in the reading.
 - Example questions to ask:
 - What is their significance?
 - Where else could they be applied?
 - How do they tie to what I already know?

TEXTBOOK NOTES

- Read the preface!
 - It details the authors' objective, how the book is organized, how and why it differs from other books, and their qualifications.
- Read the introduction too!
 - Not only is it a good summary, but it sets the stage for what you're about to read.
- Take notes at the end of every main point. Include a summary **and** how this material relates to the rest of the information in your own words
- Try using a concept map (see below) to create connections.
- Use a pencil if you're taking notes in your book. You can revise your notes/underlines as you go.
- **Outside Texts:**
 - When a professor assigns an outside text, s/he has a significant reason for doing so.
 - Read the preface, scan the table of contents, and look for key points that discuss the week's topic.
 - Typically the supporting arguments, not the details, are the most important part here.



TEXTBOOK VERSUS WRITTEN NOTES

Textbook:

- Circle, underline, and star etc.
- Jot down brief but impactful sentences or questions in the margins.
- Read the entire paragraph before taking notes.
- Be selective! Focus on only the essentials.
- Think of a mini-overview—How would you sum it all up?
- Make sure your notes are legible so you don't have to spend time deciphering.

Notebook:

- Circle, underline, and star etc.
- Write notes from textbook margins into full sentences.
- Try and categorize your notes! (cell types, common carbon molecules, noble gases etc.)
- Be sure to cross-reference your notes throughout.
- Don't be afraid to include visuals!

SQ3R

Survey—Briefly skim what you are about to read to get a general idea of the topics to be covered

Question—Write down questions that you should be able to answer after reading the text

Read—Go through the chapter and recap each paragraph

Record—Transform that recap into words in your notebook. Underline, circle, and star your notes!

Recall—Cover up your notes and try to recall what you read as if you needed to explain it to someone who didn't read it. If you can't say it now, you most likely won't remember it for the exam! Keep revisiting sections that you miss.

SPEND MOST OF YOUR TIME HERE.

What this method does:

- Promotes concentration
- Allows memory to consolidate information
- Gives you immediate feedback on your studying

ROUGH OUTLINE NOTES

A rough outline looks like this.

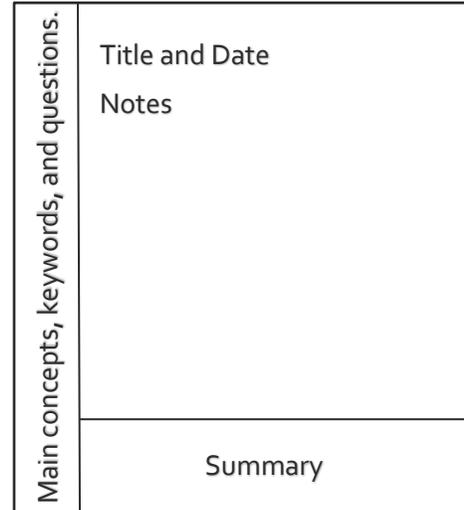
It doesn't use letters or numbers to identify facts.

Indent major sub-points and minor sub-points, and leave space between major points.

Leave space on the left to write key terms and questions during review.

CORNELL NOTES

- A type of split-page system.
- Divide the paper by drawing lines two to three inches from the left edge of the page, and three to five inches from the bottom of the page. Write the lecture titles at the top of the page with the date.
- Take notes in the large section on the right using an outline format.
 - Leave blank spaces for missed material!
 - Try indenting and numbering to keep yourself organized.
 - Use abbreviations.
 - Separate your thoughts.
- During or after class, add the main ideas, keywords, or questions in the column on the left.
- After the lecture, write a summary in the bottom section. You can summarize each page, or each day.
- To study, cover the right side of the notebook and read through the left-hand column and recite what you remember based on those main points.
- Check to see what you missed and refresh yourself.



Cornell Notes Example Page

GENERAL TIPS

- **Recall** is the most powerful way to remember your notes!
 - First, cover everything but the heading, then start speaking aloud. Try and talk about as much information as you can remember!
 - Then uncover your notes and see what you're missing. These are the things you will want to review further.
- Fun fact: You **lose 80%** of the information you learn within two weeks without reviewing.
- Don't be afraid to categorize information within your notes.
 - Rather than chronological notes for a history class, maybe categorize by key figures.
 - For English, rather than categorizing by author, categorize by the purpose of the piece.
- Visualizations (charts, graphs, charts, etc.) are always beneficial to include in notes.
- Try **mnemonic devices** to remember things.
 - Ex: ROY G BIV is for red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet.
 - Don't be afraid to create your own. You're more likely to remember them!



STRATEGIES COMPILED FROM THE FOLLOWING SOURCES:

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Novak, Joseph D., and Alberto J. Cañas. "Cmap Software." *Cmap*. Institute for Human and Machine Cognition, Jan. 2008. Web. 08 June 2017.

Pauk, Walter. *Essential Study Strategies*. H & H Pub. Co.: Clearwater, 2000. Print.

Sherfield, Robert M., Rhonda J. Montgomery, and Patricia G. Moody. *Cornerstone: Building on your Best*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005. Print.